**Unit Planning**

The unit planning process involves eight steps:

**I. Develop your unit vision**

Unpack your standards to clearly understand what evidence you will need to see from students in order to know whether they have achieved the unit goal. Then decide among the types of units you might design: goals-based units (which revolve around the learning goals themselves for one content area), thematic units (which use a common theme to draw in various learning goals from different areas), and project-based units (which focus on an end-product, some creation or event that will serve as the vehicle for students’ mastery of the learning goals).

**II. Create your summative unit assessment**

Successful teachers create their end-of-unit assessment tool before they begin teaching the unit. Begin to purposefully choose tasks that will allow students to demonstrate their mastery of the unit goal. This will serve as an initial framework for your assessment that will later feature questions that test each individual objective. After creating your assessment begin to anticipate potential student misunderstandings of your unit content.

**III. Translate your learning goals into lesson objectives**

You must translate your general learning goals into more specific lesson objectives. These objectives should be student-achievement based, measurable, and rigorous. Consider all of the prerequisite knowledge and skills that a child may need to perform the goals you outline.

**IV. Sequence your content and scaffold your lesson objectives**

The fourth step is to think critically about how you will order your content and scaffold those objectives over the course of your unit. You need to consider what order will result in the most effective sequencing of the objectives, based on Bloom’s Taxonomy and level of rigor.

**V. Schedule your objectives on the school calendar**

Use a school calendar to plot the lesson objectives, ensuring that you have allotted enough time for the knowledge and skills you wish to teach and recognizing various days or weeks that won’t allow for regular instruction. Make sure to plan for remediation, enrichment, and contingencies, and check your unit plan for alignment with other instructional tools.

**VI. Create your beginning-of-unit diagnostic tool**

Successful teachers also know where their students are when they begin each unit. To avoid covering material that they already know, develop a diagnostic that assesses prerequisite skills and knowledge of unit objectives at the beginning of each unit. This will also provide you with a benchmark by which to measure future growth.

**VII. Create a tracking system for your objectives**

Once you’ve determined what you’re teaching, you can now begin to create your classroom tracking system, a chart listing your objectives and your students’ names that will allow you to record and measure the progress of your class and students on the knowledge and skills you are teaching.

**VIII. Continually adjust your plan**

Adjust your plans based on assessment data, including your diagnostic. Interpret your data to determine class strengths and weaknesses and tailor your instructional plans in response to this information. Determine ways to include remediation and review of prerequisite skills into your unit calendar. Also, make sure to recheck your tools for alignment after making appropriate adjustments.

To summarize, all lesson plans should be built around a student-learning-centered, measurable, and rigorous objective that you derive from standards-aligned learning goals. One of the most common, effective lesson plans has five stages:

**(1) The Lesson Opening.** The lesson opening should communicate:

 What is about to happen

 Why it is important for it to happen

 How it relates to what has been done previously

 How it is going to happen

It should also:

 Engage students and capture their interest

 Provide and model clear expectations for student behavior (if necessary).

Remember that a component of opening the lesson is assessing student understanding by asking students to summarize expectations and allowing students to ask clarifying questions.

**(2) The Introduction to New Material**. During this phase, you should:

 Emphasize and reiterate key points instead of drowning students in details

 Build in activities that allow students to “take in” the information

 Use multiple approaches, such as using different senses and different angles to get at information and make it accessible

 Be mindful of potential misunderstandings

 Make purposeful choices when making instructional delivery decisions

**(3) The Guided Practice of New Material.** During this phase, you should:

 Be clear about and model behavioral expectations

 Use multiple opportunities for practice

 Scaffold practice exercises from easy to hard

 Ensure that all students have an opportunity to practice (consider both choral responses and individual responses)

 Monitor and correct student performance

**(4) The Independent Practice**. During this phase, you should:

 Be clear about and model behavioral expectations

 Ensure that the activity reflects the achievement of the objective

 Ensure that all students can demonstrate the skill or knowledge independently

 Provide opportunity for extension

You can choose to administer a formative assessment to determine student mastery of the objective during the Independent Practice.

**(5) The Lesson Closing.** Your 5-10 min. closing should address the following questions:

 What did we learn today?

 What was the significance of what we learned?

 Can students demonstrate achievement of or progress towards the objective (if you haven’t assessed them already)?

Remember to plan your lesson pacing so that it supports student learning – allocate sufficient time for guided and independent practice.

You are now familiar with the pieces of the Five-Step Lesson Plan—a process for helping students acquire knowledge and skills they did not have before entering the classroom. In the next two chapters, you will learn the different strategies that can serve to introduce new material and help students practice, as well as the factors involved in choosing between these strategies.